IN THE CLAIMS:

1.   (Currently Amended) A patent information searching apparatus for searching <u>for a desired piece of patent information</u> data based on a search criterion entered by a user, the patent information searching apparatus comprising:

a database that stores a plurality of pieces of patent information data as search

5   targets;

a field information holding unit holding, for each of a plurality of user IDs and search purposes corresponding to procedures relating to patent, field information as display flags that correspond one-to-one to data-entry fields to be used by the user for entering the search criterion, each display flag indicating whether or not to display a corresponding one of the data-

10   entry fields, and further ~~hold~~ <u>holding</u> character string data for displaying names of categories of the data-entry fields, and character string data for displaying names of the data-entry fields, each data-entry field being categorized in any of the categories including a classification category, a number category, a date category, a unique-name category and a text category;

a category display unit displaying a list of the categories using the character string

15   data for displaying the names of the categories;

a category receiving unit receiving, from the user, a selection of one or more categories from the list of the categories and a user ID of the user;

a field list display unit displaying a list of data-entry fields in each of the selected categories using the character string data for displaying the names of the data-entry fields, and

20   not to display a list of data-entry fields in the other categories that are not selected;

a field receiving unit receiving, from the user, a selection of one or more data-entry fields that are to be used for conducting the search from the data-entry fields displayed in the list;

an update unit updating the field information by setting display flags corresponding to the user ID and the selected data-entry fields and clearing display flags corresponding to the user ID and data-entry fields not selected by the user;

a field display unit displaying, in accordance with the field information, the data-entry fields for which the display flags for the user ID have been set, and not displaying the data-entry fields for which the display flags for the user ID have been cleared;

a data searching unit receiving the search criterion entered in the data-entry fields displayed by the field display unit, and search for data matching the received search criterion; and

a search result display unit displaying a result of the search conducted by the data searching unit, wherein

the data-entry fields categorized in the classification category are Classification by four industrial property laws, IPC, FI, and F Term,

the data-entry fields categorized in the number category are Application Number, Publication Number, International Application Number, International Publication Number, Unexamined Patent Publication Number, Examined Patent Publication Number, Registration Number, Priority Number, Related Application Number, and Number of Appeal,

the data-entry fields categorized in the date category are Date of Filing, Date of Publication of Application, Date of Filing of International Application, Date of Publication of International Application, Date of Publication of Unexamined Patent Application, Date of

45 Domestic Re-Publication of PCT International Application, Date of Publication of Official Gazette, Date of Publication of Examined Patent Application, Date of Registration, Date of Publication for Registered Patent, and Date of Filing of Application Claiming Priority,

the data-entry fields categorized in the unique-name category are Applicant/Right-Holder, Inventor, Representative, Examiner, and Designated Country, and

50 the data-entry fields categorized in the text category are Title of the Invention, Detailed Description of the Invention, Claim(s), Field of the Invention, Description of the Prior Art, Problem(s) to be Solved by the Invention, Means for Solving the Problem(s), Embodiment of the Invention, Effect of the Invention, Brief Description of the Drawings, Description of Characters, Abstract, Abstract + Claim(s), and Full Text.

2.-4.   (Cancelled)

5.   (Previously Presented) The patent information searching apparatus of Claim 1, wherein

the category display unit displays the list of the categories on a screen where the data-entry fields are displayed by the field display unit,

5 the field list display unit displays the list of the data-entry fields on the screen where the data-entry fields are displayed by the field display unit, and

the field display unit updates the displayed data-entry fields immediately when the field receiving unit receives the selection of the data-entry fields.

6.-15.   (Cancelled)

16.   (Previously Presented) The patent information searching apparatus of Claim 1, wherein

the field receiving unit receives from the user, a selection of two or more data-entry fields that are to be used for conducting the search from the data-entry fields displayed in the list,

the update unit updates the field information by setting display flags corresponding to the two or more selected data-entry fields and clearing display flags corresponding to data-entry fields not selected by the user, and

the field display unit, in accordance with the field information, simultaneously displays the two or more data-entry fields for which the display flags have been set, and not display the data-entry fields for which the display flags have been cleared.

17.   (Previously Presented) The patent information searching apparatus of Claim 1 further comprising:

a user ID input unit to accept a user ID wherein the display flags are associated with the user ID such that the display flags are preserved when the user ID is accepted at a subsequent period of time.

18.   (Previously Presented) The patent information searching apparatus of Claim 17, wherein the display flags have a value of 1 if the display flags have been set, and the display flags have a value of 0 if the display flags have been cleared.